

New Reimbursement Process For NIH Peer Reviewers

Frequently Asked Questions for Peer Reviewers and NIH Staff

This website and the FAQs are the primary means of receiving answers to your questions, submitting your concerns, or sharing your issues with the NIH and other reviewers. NIH will do its utmost to resolve these issues. The NIH is committed to helping you navigate these changes.

This site is monitored during business hours. You can call 301-435-1131 to talk to someone, but it is best to first use this website to find answers to your questions. To document potential questions, issues, or ideas regarding the CCR/DUNS registration and the new NIH reimbursement processes, please go to the “Contact Us” section at: <http://www.srea.nih.gov/#> on this website to send your comments and questions. This site will be continuously updated with new questions or concerns as they arise.

The following provides the URLs for all published NIH Guide Notices regarding the new reimbursement process:

<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-05-062.html>

<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-05-065.html>

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I. CCR/DUNS Reviewer Registration

A. General Questions

The following section provides general information for the registration and reimbursement processes.

The most common DUNS/CCR registration problem is that reviewers are not using or not carefully following the NIH-specific instructions.

Please use these instructions to facilitate the registration process:
www.csr.nih.gov/Reviewer/CCR.htm

Note: You may need to copy and paste this link.

1- Why is NIH requiring DUNS/CCR registration for peer reviewers?

The NIH appreciates that additional effort is being requested from reviewers at this time. This change has been mandated based on a management report noting that the prior system was unacceptably vulnerable. To protect the public's trust and proper use of public funds, NIH must make this change in the reviewer reimbursement process.

2- What is the deadline for DUNS/CCR registration?

Registration is ongoing and is continuously available. Reviewers should be registered prior to the first review meeting in which they participate after September 30, 2005. Not registering prior to the meeting may result in delayed reimbursement and honorarium processing. NIH initially suggested that current and potential reviewers register by September 1, 2005, to ensure that as many reviewers as possible are registered prior to the October 2005 peer review meetings. This timeline also provided the NIH more time to troubleshoot the new system if problems arose.

3- Why should I use the NIH instructions for these steps?

The NIH-provided instructions are customized for NIH reviewers and are meant to be helpful to you in streamlining the registration process. The CCR site is set up primarily for businesses, not individuals. There is much information required for businesses that you, as an NIH peer reviewer, are not required to fill in. The instructions provide detailed and specific information on which sections can be left blank and the appropriate answers for potentially confusing questions. Many reviewers have registered successfully following these instructions.

4- Will I need to go through this registration process for every NIH review meeting for which I am a peer reviewer?

No. Once you have obtained your DUNS number and registered with CCR, this information will be applicable to all NIH meetings. You will need to verify your CCR information on an annual basis in response to an annual e-mail reminder. This will require your TPIN number; so keep it safe and available.

5- What are the advantages of this change for me as a reviewer?

- You will not be required to submit vouchers.

- Meals and incidental out-of-pocket expenses you incur will be covered by a flat rate reimbursement. The intent of the flat rate is to ensure that you are reimbursed for your reasonable and usual expenses associated with your service as a peer reviewer. The details of the flat rate are being established and will be published as soon as possible, but it is designed to cover the reasonable and prudent expenses of the vast majority of reviewers based on past history of incurred expenses.
- Reimbursement under the new system will be comparable to the prior system.
- You will not incur out-of-pocket expenses for your hotel room, which will be directly billed to the NIH under the new system.
- You will no longer receive a paper check. Your reimbursement and honorarium payment will be deposited electronically directly into the U.S. bank account of your choice.
- Receipts will be required only if you request an exception to the flat rate. The details of the exception process are being established and will be published as soon as possible. This process is to ensure your reimbursement of your reasonable and prudent expenses in the rare cases that the flat rate is inadequate.

6- What stays the same under the new system?

- The honorarium remains \$200/day of service for in-person or teleconference reviewers. Mail reviewers will still receive a \$100 honorarium. Federal reviewers are still not allowed to accept an honorarium.
- You will still receive a single 1099 for all NIH honoraria per calendar year.
- You will not incur out-of-pocket expenses for travel tickets if you use the NIH travel contractor.

7- If I have already obtained a DUNS number and registered with CCR under other circumstances, do I need to do this again for NIH?

No. Your DUNS/CCR registration requirement for NIH is complete. Please note that academic institutions and companies also may have their own DUNS number, which is distinct from the individual number you are required to obtain to register with CCR.

8- If I am a reviewer for the National Science Foundation (NSF), do I need to complete this registration process for NIH?

Yes. You must still complete DUNS/CCR registration for the NIH. The NSF system of reimbursing their reviewers is different and it is not transferable to NIH.

9- Will I need to obtain a DUNS number and register with CCR again if required by other Federal agencies/entities?

No. This registration is applicable for other Federal agencies/entities that may have DUNS/CCR registration requirements.

10- If I am not attending the meeting, but only participating by teleconference or submitting a mail review, must I register with DUNS/CCR?

Yes. All teleconference and mail reviewers must register with DUNS/CCR so that NIH can pay their honoraria.

11- Do foreign-based reviewers need to register with DUNS/CCR?

Yes. More detail is provided in a later section on Foreign Reviewers. In brief, you will be required to register with DUNS/CCR, but with slightly different instructions, which are noted in the NIH-specific instructions, <http://www.csr.nih.gov/Reviewer/CCR.htm>.

- If you do not have a social security number, you will need an NCAGE code, which you can receive on the CCR site, <http://www.ccr.gov>. If you have a U.S. bank account, enter that information and your reimbursement and honorarium will be directly deposited to that account.
- If you do not have a U.S. bank account, the address you enter in the CCR site will be used to mail a check to you; direct deposit can be used only to U.S. bank accounts.

12- Can I serve as a peer reviewer without registering?

Yes. However, in that case you cannot be reimbursed for your meeting-related expenses, such as meals and other incidentals and you will not receive an honorarium. However, under the new system, your charges for your hotel room will be paid directly by NIH, not by you. Also, your travel by plane or train will be paid directly by the NIH if you use the NIH-designated travel agent. Although possible, this approach is not the preference of NIH.

13- What are the steps to complete DUNS/CCR registration?

There are two primary steps:

1. You must obtain a DUNS number either by calling 1-866-705-5711 or applying online at <https://eupdate.dnb.com/requestoptions/government/ccrreg/>.
2. Once the DUNS number is activated (usually within 24 hours of applying), you can then register with the Central Contractor Registration by going online to <http://www.ccr.gov>.

Please follow the full instructions, which can be found at: <http://www.csr.nih.gov/Reviewer/CCR.htm>.

14- Must I register with DUNS/CCR to continue as a peer reviewer for NIH?

A few reviewers will continue to participate as peer reviewers, but have opted not to register. In a case such as this, under the new system, charges for the hotel room will be paid directly by NIH, not by the reviewer. Also, travel by plane or train will be paid directly by the NIH if the reviewer uses the NIH-designated travel agent. However, if not registered, the reviewer will not be reimbursed for meeting-related expenses such as meals and other incidentals, and the reviewer will not receive the honorarium. NIH does not recommend this as an option, but it is a choice you have available to continue as a peer reviewer without registering with DUNS/CCR.

15- This change may affect my decision to participate as a peer reviewer.

The NIH peer-review system of review is recognized as the premier approach to assessing the scientific and technical merit of grant applications and contract proposals. Peer review works as well as it does because of the essentially selfless dedication of qualified reviewers. NIH recognizes and deeply appreciates the efforts and time commitments you make to participate in the peer-review process. It would be a loss to the power of this system and all who depend on it if reviewers opted out due to this mandated change in reviewer reimbursement processes. NIH encourages you to reconsider a decision to not participate as a peer reviewer because of this mandated change in reimbursement processes.

B. Step 1 of the Registration Process: DUNS Registration Questions

1- How do I register for the DUNS number?

Access the site via this URL:

<https://eupdate.dnb.com/requestoptions/government/ccrreg/> or register by telephone at 1-866-705-5711. Full instructions can be found at www.csr.nih.gov/Reviewer/CCR.htm.

2- When is the DUNS number active so I can proceed to the CCR registration?

If registering by telephone, you will receive your DUNS number at the end of the call, but the DUNS number is not active until ~12-24 hours later. In registering via the web, you will receive your DUNS number by e-mail; the number is active upon receipt of the email.

Note that the registration is not finished until you receive an email from CCR that instructs you to log on again to finish. The confirmation number is needed when you go into CCR to finish the registration process after you receive an email from CCR. You need to enter your DUNS number AND your confirmation number to access the site and receive the TPIN. Once you have the TPIN, the confirmation number is no longer needed.

3- What are the security and privacy issues for DUNS?

If you register for DUNS by telephone, you may opt out of their marketing lists by informing the DUNS agent during the call that you would like to be removed from their marketing lists. However, you may opt out at any time by calling Customer Service at 1-800-234-3867. Full instructions for NIH reviewers can be found at: www.csr.nih.gov/Reviewer/CCR.htm.

4- Is there a process for NIH to provide a "blanket" request for removal from DUNS marketing lists?

NIH asked DUNS if this could be done and the answer was no.

5- Does the DUNS registration process require sensitive information such as my social security number or banking information?

No. All that is required is basic contact information. If you use your business information, this typically is not considered sensitive, as it is generally publicly available.

6- Can I use a DUNS number associated with my university/institution or company?

No. You must have a DUNS number assigned specifically to you as an individual.

7- Does a DUNS number expire or require renewal?

No. A DUNS number essentially is a unique identifier for you as an individual. The DUNS number does not expire and does not need to be renewed.

8- What should I do if there are changes to my contact information?

You should go to the DUNS website at:

<https://eupdate.dnb.com/requestoptions/government/ccrreg/> or call Customer Service at 1-800-234-3867. You can access and update your information. NIH cannot update your information for you.

9- Should I keep a record of the information I provide to D&B in getting my DUNS number?

Yes. You need to record the name and address that you provide to D&B so that you can use the exact same information and format for the CCR process in Step 2.

C. Step 2 of the Registration Process: CCR Registration Questions

1- How do I register with CCR?

You can register only via the web for CCR, <http://www.ccr.gov>. You will need your activated DUNS number and the NIH instructions to register, which can be found at: www.csr.nih.gov/Reviewer/CCR.htm. You should record the information you provided in the DUNS registration process so that you can enter exactly the same format of your name and address information in CCR, which is a requirement for successful registration.

2- Why should I use the NIH instructions to register with CCR?

The instructions were developed specifically for NIH reviewers. The CCR site is set up primarily for businesses, not individuals. There is much information required for businesses that you, as an NIH peer reviewer, are not required to fill in. We have indicated in the instructions which sections you can leave blank as well as answers to specific questions that may be confusing.

In addition, the NIH instructions provide a convenient list of the required information to register with CCR, which will facilitate and make the process of registration more efficient for you.

3- What if I do not complete my registration and have to return later?

As noted in the NIH-provided instructions, you should retain the confirmation number provided to you once you enter your contact information. Along with this confirmation number and the DUNS number, you will be able to access your information and complete your registration.

4- What are the security and privacy issues with CCR registration?

The CCR is a U.S. Government run database, specifically under the Treasury Department. This site is secure, but it is publicly accessible or you would not be able to register. However, if a name is put in their search engine, all that is revealed is the registrant's basic address information. Access to sensitive information such as social security number is accessible only with your DUNS number AND your TPIN, which is why you must keep your TPIN secure. More information is available at: <http://www.csr.nih.gov/Reviewer/CCR.htm>.

5- What are some examples of confusing questions on the CCR site?

- Annual revenue: you do not need to disclose your income: enter \$1.00.
- Number of employees: enter 1.
- Fiscal year end date: enter 12/31.

These are just a few examples. The NIH-specific CCR and DUNS instructions will enable you to navigate through the CCR requirements, saving you time and clarifying potentially confusing questions that may arise as you go through the screens. <http://www.csr.nih.gov/Reviewer/CCR.htm>.

6- What if I do not have a social security number?

Obtain an NCAGE number in CCR. See Foreign Reviewer section 1D for more details.

7- What is the Point of Contact (POC) template in the CCR?

The POC template is an easy way to speed up the registration process by providing a single entry for YOUR (Not your assistant's) contact information that can be replicated as needed for different screens in the CCR registration process.

8- What is a TPIN (Trading Partner Identification Number)?

You will receive a TPIN from CCR upon successful registration. This number is your secure password that will allow you to update or edit your CCR registration information. You should treat this number as you would handle any secure password. Do not share it with anyone. No one, including CCR or NIH, should ever ask you to divulge your TPIN, either by calling you, by email, or by written request. Any request you receive to divulge your TPIN number should be considered non-legitimate. Contact CCR Customer Service and let them know of any such incidents: 1-888-227-2423 (U.S.) or 269-961-5757 (Internationally) or via the web at: <https://www.bpn.gov/CCR/scripts/indextpin.asp>.

9- What if I lose or forget my TPIN?

If you forget your TPIN or the TPIN has been compromised in terms of someone else potentially knowing it, you should call CCR Customer Service immediately to receive a new TPIN and cancel out the old one. CCR Customer Service: 1-888-227-2423 (U.S.) or 269-961-5757 (Internationally). Web: <https://www.bpn.gov/CCR/scripts/indextpin.asp>.

10- Does my CCR registration or TPIN expire or need to be renewed?

Your CCR registration and TPIN do not expire, however, you will be notified by an annual email from CCR reminding you to verify your CCR information, which will ensure that your checks are deposited to the appropriate account. NIH cannot do this for you.

11- What should I do if there are changes to my contact or banking information for the CCR?

You should go to the CCR website at <http://www.ccr.gov>. Using your DUNS number and TPIN, you can update your information. NIH cannot update your information for you.

D. Foreign-Based Reviewer Registration

1- I am a foreign (non-U.S.) reviewer. How does the DUNS/CCR registration process work for me?

You will be required to register with DUNS/CCR, but with slightly different instructions, which are noted in the NIH-specific instructions, <http://www.csr.nih.gov/Reviewer/CCR.htm>.

- If you do not have a social security number, you will need an NCAGE code, which you can receive on the CCR site, <http://www.ccr.gov>. If you have a U.S. bank account, enter that information and your reimbursement and honorarium will be directly deposited to that account.
- If you do not have a U.S. bank account, the address you enter in the CCR site will be used to mail a check to you; direct deposit can be used only to U.S. bank accounts.

- 2- **I am from Canada and do not know the correct region code to enter into DUNS.**

Here are the Canadian region codes needed for DUNS registration:

AB>Alberta
BC>British Columbia
MB>Manitoba
NB>New Brunswick
NF>Newfoundland
NT>Northwest Territories
NS>Nova Scotia
NU>Nunavut
ON>Ontario
PE>Prince Edward Island
PQ>Quebec
SK>Saskatchewan
YT>Yukon Territory

- 3- **What does NCAGE stand for?**

North Atlantic Treaty Organization Commercial and Government Entity. This number is used if you do not have a social security number.

E. Federally Employed Reviewers or Special Government Employees

- 1- **How do these changes in reviewer reimbursement affect me?**

Your status and processes remain the same. You are still subject to the Federal Travel Regulations.

- Your travel will still be done via a travel order.
- If you are a non-local federal reviewer, you will use the staff travel agent to secure your travel reservations, not the NIH contractor designated for non-federal reviewers.
- If you are a local federal employee, you can request that a room be included in the block request the SRA will make when setting up the meeting. However, you will not be reimbursed for this expense, but must cover it yourself.
- You will not receive an honorarium, which is no change.
- You will pay for your hotel room and be reimbursed via the usual route, which may require vouchers or some other means of transmitting travel reimbursement requests.

- 2- **How are Special Government Employees (SGEs) affected by these changes?**

SGEs serve on NIH Institute or Center councils. They serve under different rules than peer reviewers in terms of reporting income sources and activities in which they can engage the few days they are at Council. SGEs are NOT affected by

these changes in reimbursement. They follow the rules as noted in the above question covering for federally employed persons in terms of their travel arrangements and reimbursements.

F. Troubleshooting DUNS/CCR Registration

The most common DUNS/CCR registration problem is attributable to not using or not carefully following the NIH-specific instructions.

Please use these instructions to facilitate the registration process:

www.csr.nih.gov/Reviewer/CCR.htm

Note: You may need to copy and paste this link.

- 1- **I received a DUNS number and when I search the DUNS database I can find what I assume is myself, listed in Evanston. Apparently I used my home address rather than the office in Chicago. When I tried to complete the CCR registration, I received a message that the information I supplied did not match the database.**

You must use the exact same format for entering your name and address in both systems. When you go to the CCR site, it may be useful to have printed out the registration pages from DUNS to help you remember the way you entered the data. You can contact DUNS at 1-866-705-5711 and request that the address be changed if you cannot remember the exact format.

- 2- **I think I have successfully negotiated through the DUNS/CCR registration process, but I do have a lingering concern. When asked to provide a "Government Business POC Alternate" and an "Electronic Business POC Alternate", I was not able to leave the fields blank, so I used my spouse's name and data. Please let me know if there is a better way to comply.**

As noted in the NIH instructions, you should use the POC template for all of these fields. The same information can be copied in all POC fields. You do not need to enter distinct information in the Alternate section. If you supplied someone else's information, you can access the CCR site with your DUNS number and TPIN, access this screen and replace the information.

- 3- **The wait on the telephone to register for DUNS is taking a long time. Any suggestions?**

Due to Hurricane Katrina, DUNS has experienced a significant increase in the number of requests for DUNS numbers. It is suggested that you wait no longer than 10 minutes on the phone. You can either try back at a later time or use the web registration, but be prepared for delays or inaccessibility for the same reasons. Patience is required at this time.

II. Reimbursement Questions

A. Flat Rate

1- What is the flat rate?

The actual flat rate is not yet established, but is being designed to cover reasonable and prudent expenses other than hotel room and travel that you incur related to your service as a peer reviewer. Hotel room charge and travel will be paid directly by NIH, requiring no out-of-pocket expense incurred by you. See Section III for more details on hotel and travel processes. An announcement will be published as soon as this rate is approved.

2- How is the flat rate determined?

The flat rate determination is based on the current methodology used by the Department of Defense and NSF. However, the specific dollar amount is based on a sampling of current NIH vouchers. Based on this survey, the flat rate is estimated to cover the vast majority of ground transportation and incidental expenses reported by NIH reviewers. Meal allowances were then added to this figure to arrive at the final flat rate.

3- What does the flat rate cover?

- **Honorarium.**
Note: The honorarium amounts and rules remain unchanged. It is still \$200/day of service for in-person or teleconference reviewers. Mail reviewers will still receive a \$100 honorarium. Federal reviewers are still not allowed to accept an honorarium.
- Meal allowance and incidental expenses, including ground transportation costs that may include taxi fares, mileage driven in a personally owned vehicle, or other incidental meeting-related expenses not otherwise covered.

4- What is not included in the flat rate?

- The hotel bill for the room charges. NIH pays the room charge directly. Note, however, if you have additional charges to your room, such as internet connection, movie rental, meals, mini-bar, spa charges, or any charges other than the room bill, you will be charged on the credit card you supply at check-in. NIH pays the room charge directly, but not these additional charges.
- Airline, train, or bus tickets that you purchase through the NIH-designated travel agent.

5- Will the reimbursement for the per diem be included on a 1099 form for the IRS and will I have to pay taxes on the entire flat rate reimbursement?

No. The amount reported on the 1099 will reflect only the honorarium amounts incurred in the calendar year, just as in the past.

B. Exceptions to the Flat Rate

1- What are the views of NIH regarding exceptions to the flat rate?

As always, the NIH is committed to ensuring that you are reimbursed for all reasonable peer review meeting-related expenses. The flat rate is calculated to cover the vast majority of reviewer expenses, so it is expected that exception requests should be unusual. This process will result in an additional administrative burden on the NIH and reduce the administrative cost-savings to be realized by the flat rate system of reimbursement. As needed, the flat rate will be reviewed to reasonably minimize the need for exception requests.

2- Can I request an exception ahead of the peer review meeting?

It is ideal that you disclose/request exceptions in advance of the peer review meeting. Often you will know in advance that your expenses will exceed the flat rate. Telling your Scientific Review Administrator (SRA) of your request for an exception to the flat rate in advance will assist the NIH in processing your reimbursement in the most efficient and timely manner possible.

Sometimes, you will not know in advance that your expenses will exceed the flat rate. Submitting your receipts and justification to your SRA promptly will facilitate processing, but overall exception request processing likely will take longer than flat rate reimbursement since each exception request must be evaluated and approved.

3- What do I need to provide with my exception request?

Each exception request will require you to justify the request and submit receipts or other documentation for all amounts to be reimbursed. Each exception request will be approved on a case-by-case basis. Exceptions must be prudent and reasonable.

4- Can a blanket justification be used for all attendees at a meeting?

No. Justifications for exceptions to the flat rate process must be submitted on a reviewer-by-reviewer basis and will be evaluated as such. There may be meetings for which the extra expenses affect all reviewers, but it is not possible to provide a blanket waiver even under these conditions.

III. Hotel and Travel

A. Hotel

1- Do I still need to confirm a hotel reservation with my credit card?

For meetings held through at least October 2005, reviewers are encouraged to confirm their rooms with their own credit card. The NIH plans to pay these room charges directly beginning with meetings held October 2005. However, given that this is a period of transition, it may be wise for you to confirm your room to ensure that the room will be held for you.

There may be cases in this transition period in which you are billed for the room. You will be reimbursed, but it will be through the exception process, requiring you to send NIH your hotel receipt. This is a transition plan. When the new process is fully in place, you will no longer be required to confirm the room using your credit card nor will you be billed for the room charge.

2- Will I still need to provide a credit card at check-in?

A credit card will be required at check-in to cover incidentals; this does not change with the new system. Even though the hotel bill for the room charges will be paid directly by NIH, if you have additional charges to your room, such as internet connection, movie rental, meals, mini-bar, spa charges, or any charges other than the room bill, you will be charged on the credit card you supply at check-in. NIH pays the room charge directly, but not these additional charges.

3- If I am a local reviewer, can I stay in the hotel at government expense?

Local reviewers who are not federal employees are allowed to stay in the hotel if they choose not to drive back and forth each day to their home. The room will be included in the requested block of rooms that NIH will pay directly.

If you are a local federal employee, you can request that a room be included in the block request the SRA will make when setting up the meeting. However, you will not be reimbursed for this expense, but must cover it yourself.

B. Travel

1- If I drive my own vehicle to the meeting, how will the mileage expense be reimbursed?

The flat rate covers ground transportation (i.e., any transportation not covered by a travel agent such as airline or train tickets) expense. In some cases this includes taxis, but in other cases it includes driving your own vehicle.

If the flat rate is insufficient to cover this expense, you must request an exception to the flat rate. After the meeting, you must supply receipts and a mileage calculation substantiating the additional expense. Each such request must be prudent and reasonable and will be evaluated before being processed for reimbursement.

2- What regulations are governing travel for peer-review meetings under this new arrangement?

Travel to peer review meetings for non-federal reviewers will now be governed by Federal Acquisition Regulations instead of Federal Travel Regulations.

For federal travelers, the Federal Travel Regulations apply.